Exploring the Motivations of Undergraduate Sport Management Students

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As universities grapple with the challenges of lower enrollments and student retention, it is imperative to explore student motivation. In every level of education, the motivation of students is a concern of teachers (Hofer, 2018) as they serve as important stakeholders (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2002). This concern has led to the development of a variety of studies and scales in order to achieve the desired understanding. Especially in colleges and universities, research on student motivation is diverse and with several different models and perspectives (Pintrich, 2004). While academic literature exists for student motivation, examinations of student motivation within particular degree programs such as sport management are limited. Thus, this study seeks to explore the current circumstances in the sport management discipline.

Although a lack of literature exists in the sport management field, Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) has advanced research in motivation. Two primary types of motivation exist within SDT: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Understanding to what extent sport management students are motivated intrinsically and extrinsically may provide beneficial insight for academic faculty and the hundreds of institutions offering sport management majors. SDT provides information for developing and maintaining motivational environments in sport while promoting psychological need satisfaction, autonomous motivation, personal growth, well-being, and adaptive behaviors (Ntoumanis, 2012). To answer these calls, the purpose of this study is to learn more about sport management students; specifically, the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations that guide their decision to major in sport management.

The primary research questions in this study are:

R1) What intrinsically motivates sport management undergraduate students most among the three types of intrinsic motivation?

R2) What extrinsically motivates sport management undergraduate students most among the three types of extrinsic motivation?

To build upon the theoretical framework based on SDT, this study used mixed-methods research design as it helps researchers merge and review data from quantitative and qualitative components for an extensive examination (Creswell, 2009). The questionnaire incorporated quantitative elements of the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS; Vallerand et. al, 1992) and Student Engagement Scale (Gayles & Hu, 2016). Additionally, participants are offered the opportunity to interview following the completion of the questionnaire to gain qualitative perspectives. Moreover, this joint approach may triangulate findings from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives (Andrew et. al, 2011). Furthermore, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) has also been utilized for coding and deriving themes from completed interviews. The first round of respondents (N=6) in this ongoing study suggested intrinsic motivation to know (M=5.83, SD=0.85) and extrinsic motivation through regulation for identification (M=6.04, SD=0.80) facilitated the drive of undergraduate sport management students. After further data collection through early 2021, findings may be beneficial for both students and university entities to account for these motivations and student engagement in program design and delivery as their student stakeholders weigh their options in higher education and respective careers.